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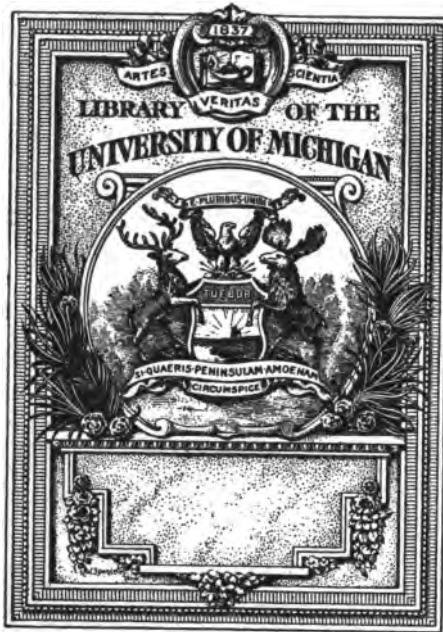
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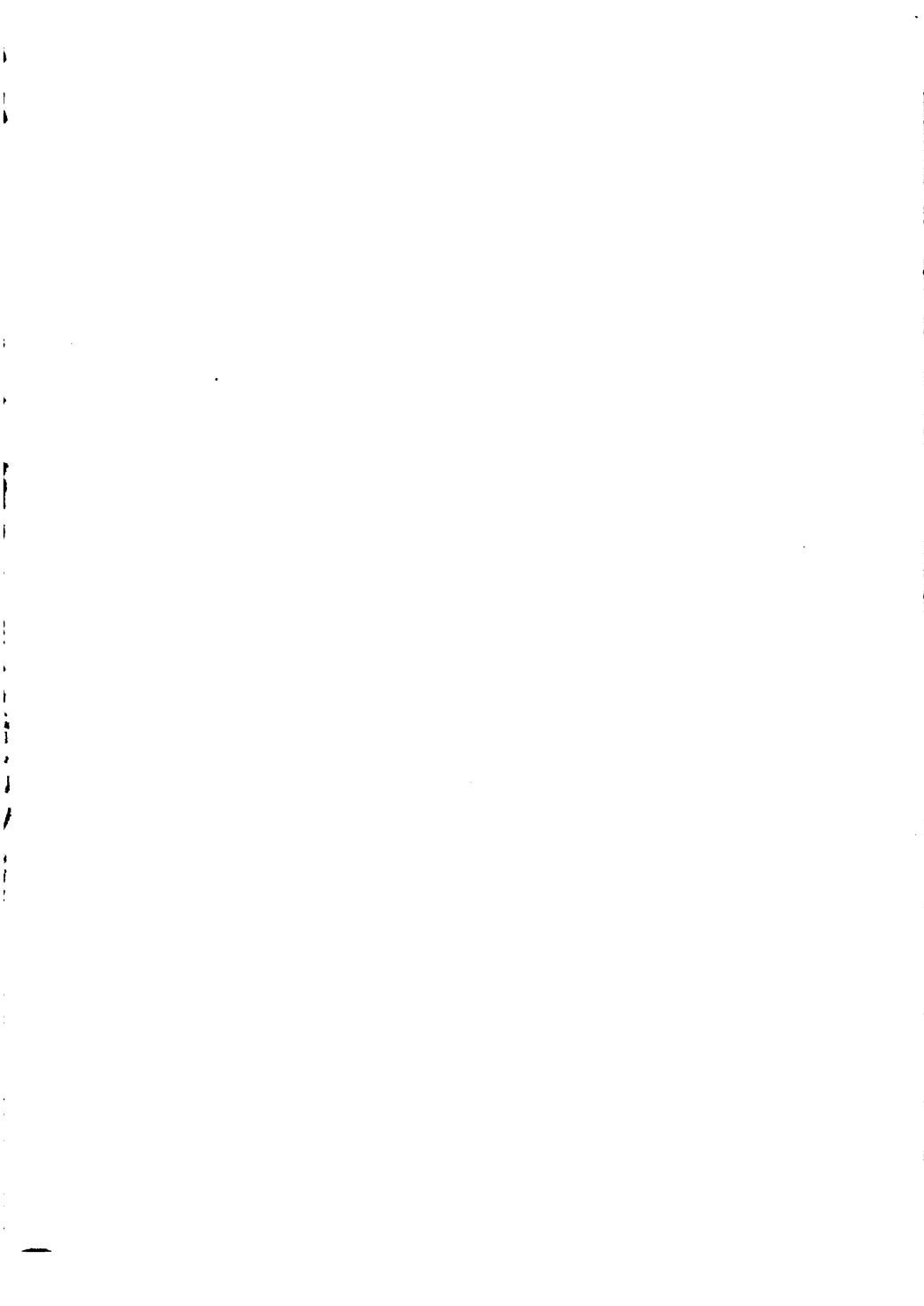
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The Star of Bethlehem







He that was a member of
god did never die before

The Star of Bethlehem

A MIRACLE PLAY OF THE NATIVITY

RECONSTRUCTED FROM

The Towneley and Other Old English Cycles

(OF THE XIIIth, XIVth, AND XVth CENTURIES)

And Supplemented and Adapted to Modern
Conditions

BY

CHARLES MILLS GAYLEY

As composed for Mr. Ben Greet, and presented
by his Company



FOX, DUFFIELD AND COMPANY
NEW YORK

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OF THE ENGLISH MIRACLE PLAYS

IN the miracle plays of our forefathers the mirth, the proverbial philosophy, the social aims, the æsthetic and religious ideals of the Middle Ages still live for us. At first these plays existed as units, each commemorating some episode in the life of Christ or of the saints, or some important fragment of Old Testament history. But gradually they coalesced at this place and that into a cycle (or sequence of anywhere from five to fifty dramatic compositions) covering in one vast survey the whole of sacred history and prophecy, as told in scripture and in ecclesiastical legend, from the Fall of the Angels to the Day of Judgment. The cycle of York stands to one of its component pageants as the minster itself to chapel, cloister, nave or crypt. And the same simple, patient, practical mystics built both cycle and cathedral. If we would

[v]

know how our fathers lived and dreamed
we should study their temples of dramatic
verse as well as their aspirations in stone.

In England the germs of these cycles are found, even before the Norman Conquest, in dramatic tropes or paraphrases of the sacred narrative, presented by the clergy in connection with the divine service. Later these efforts at histrionic, and therefore more vivid, presentation of scriptural lessons gradually lapsed from the Latin into the English tongue, and from the church to the church-yard or the village green, and from the clerical to the lay actor—and they found in the process ever warmer welcome with the people of the town. During the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the trades-unions of those days,—the crafts or gilds of centres like Chester, York, Coventry, Wakefield, Dublin, Digby, Beverley and half a hundred more,—adopted the cycles and presented them, each in its own way, but in their totality and in chronological sequence, in connection with the great festivals of the Christian year. For the day appointed, say that of *Corpus Christi*, each gild would have its own portion of the dramatic mystery to prepare. The gild not

only regarded its particular play as a property or adjunct of the order, but delighted to improvise new scenes or passages and (in earlier days, at any rate) to stand the expense of the performance. One of the York registers shows that the first pageant of the Cycle of *Corpus Christi* was acted by the Tanners. It was "God the Father making the heavens, angels and archangels, Lucifer and the angels who fell with him into hell." The second pageant, "the creation of the world," was acted by the Plasterers; the third, "the making of Adam and Eve out of clay of the earth," by the Cardmakers; the fourth, "God forbidding Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of life," by the Fullers; and so on—fifty-one plays, closing with Doomsday, which was presented by the craft of Mercers. A certain humorous affinity of gild and play occasionally leaps to the eye, as when the Shipwrights devote themselves to the *Construction of the Ark*, the Fishmongers to the *Flood*, the Chandlers to the *Shepherds and the Star*, the Goldcrafts to the *Three Kings*, the Sailors and Sawyers to the *Massacre of the Innocents*, and the Barbers to the *Baptism of Jesus*. Each gild was wont to act on a

wheeled platform or “pageant” scaffold ; and the waggons bearing scenery and players made the circuit of the town, stopping the successive repetition of the performance at duly appointed stations, where spectators in huge concourse stood or sat to be edified from dewy morn till eve. The celebration of the Craft Plays was a civic event: in their heyday the supreme social, æsthetic and theatrical amusement of our ancestors. And none the less so because they were originally devotional in character and intention.

It must not be supposed, however, that after the industrial crafts had taken them up, these miracles ceased to be cultivated by the clerical and semi-clerical orders, or to be acted in ecclesiastical precincts. The gild of which we first are informed that its functions were to cultivate processional and artistic as well as devotional and philanthropic ends was semi-clerical rather than secular. It is that of the Parish Clerks of London, incorporated by Henry III. about 1240. Of these clerks Hone, in his *Ancient Mysteries*, says that they were under the patronage of St. Nicholas, and that it was an essential part of their profession, not only to sing, but to read, an accomplishment almost

solely confined to the clergy, so that, on the whole, they seem to come under the denomination of a semi-religious fraternity. "It was anciently customary," Hone tells us, "for men and women of the first quality, ecclesiastics and others who were lovers of church music, to be admitted into this corporation, and they gave large gratuities for the support and education of many persons in the practice of that science. Their public feasts were frequent, and celebrated with song and music." According to Warton, their profession, employment and character naturally dictated to this spiritual brotherhood the representation of plays, especially those of the spiritual kind. We do not know how early this semi-religious gild took to acting, but it is certain that in 1391 they had been playing cyclic miracles at Skinner's Well (Clerkenwell) for many years, since they enjoyed, at that time and place, the presence of the king, queen and nobles of the realm during a performance which was of great *éclat* and lasted for three days. In 1409, the Clerkenwell plays were still so popular that "most part of the nobility and gentry of England" attended during a dramatic cycle which lasted eight

days. It is noteworthy that Stow, the historian, calls these interludes at Skinner's Well of 1391 an "example of later time," informing us that "of old time" the Parish Clerks of London were accustomed yearly to assemble at Clerks' Well, near by, "and to play some large history of Holy Scripture." Since Clerkenwell is mentioned by Fitz-stephen in his description of London as a place frequented by scholars and youth, I think it practically certain that the sacred plays of which he elsewhere speaks as acted in London, between 1170 and 1182, were played then by similar Parish Clerks and at this same place.

When, after the reinstitution of the festival of *Corpus Christi* in 1311, the miracle plays began to be a function of the gilds, their secularisation, even though the clerks still participated in the acting, was but a question of time; and the injection of crude comedy was a natural response to the civic demand. Indeed if we consider Comedy in its higher meaning as the play of the individual achieving his ends, not by revolt but by adjustment to circumstance and convention, the miracle play was in its essence a preparation for comedy rather than tragedy.

For the theme of these dramas is, in a word, Christian : the career of the individual as an integral part of the social organism, of the religious whole. So also, their aim : the welfare of the social individual. They do not exist for the purpose of portraying immoderate self-assertion and the vengeance that rides after, but the beauty of holiness or the comfort of contrition. Herod, Judas and Antichrist are foils, not heroes. The hero of the miracle seals his salvation by accepting the spiritual ideal of the community. These plays contribute in a positive manner to the maintenance of the social organism. The tragedies of life and literature, on the other hand, proceed from secular histories, histories of personages liable to disaster because of excessive peculiarity,—of person or position. Tragedy is the drama of Cain, of the individual in opposition to the social, political, divine; its occasion is an upheaval of the social organism. The dramatic tone of the miracle cycle is, therefore, determined by the conservative character of Christianity in general; the nature of the several plays is, however, modified by the relation of each to one or other of the supreme crises in the biblical history of

God's ways toward man. The plays leading up to, and revolving about, the Nativity are of happy ending, and were doubtless regarded, by authors and spectators, as we regard comedy. The murder of Abel, at first sombre, gradually passes into the comedy of the grotesque. The massacre of the innocents emphasises not the weeping of a Rachel, but the joyous escape of the Virgin and the Child. In all such stories the horrible is kept in the background or used by way of suspense before the happy outcome, or frequently as material for mirth. Upon the sweet and joyous character of the pageants of Joseph and Mary and the Child it is unnecessary to dwell. Those incorporated in the revival of the ancient drama presented in this volume witness to the quality of the rest. They are of the very essence of comedy. Indeed it must be said that in the old cycles the plays surrounding the Crucifixion are not tragedy; they are specimens of the serious drama, of tragedy averted. The drama of the cross is a triumph. In no cycle does the *consummatum est* close the pageant of the Crucifixion; the actors announce, and the spectators believe, that this is "Goddis Sone," whom within three

days they shall again behold, though he has been "nayled on a tree unworthilye to die."

But though the dramatic edifice constructed by our mediæval forbears is Comedy, it is also divine. And not for a moment did these builders lose their reverence for the House Spiritual that was sacred, nor once forget that the stones which they ignorantly and often mirthfully swung into strange juxtaposition were themselves hewn by Other Hands. The comic scenes of the English Miracle should, therefore, be regarded not as interruptions to the sacred drama, nor as independent episodes, but as counterpoint or dramatic relief. So, in the *Second Shepherds' Play*, which affords the comic strand of the present rehabilitation of the miracles, one cannot but remark the propriety of the charm, as well as the dramatic effect, with which the foreground of the sheep-stealing dissolves into the radiant picture of the Nativity. The pastoral atmosphere is already shot with a prophetic gleam ; the fulfilment is, therefore, no shock or contrast, but a transfiguration — an epiphany. It is, moreover, to be remembered that such characters and episodes as are comically treated are

of secular derivation, or, if scriptural, of no sacred significance. Thus the comic and the realistic in the poet were set free; and it is just when he is embroidering the material of mystery with the stammel-red or russet of his homespun that he is of most interest to us. As soon as the plays have passed into the hands of the gilds, the playwright puts himself most readily into sympathy with the literary consciousness as well as the untutored æsthetic taste of his public when he colours the spectacle, old or new, with what is pre-eminently popular and distinctively national. In the minster and out of it, all through the Christian year, the townsfolk of York or Chester had as much of ritual, of scriptural narrative and tragic mystery as they desired, and probably more. When the pageants were acted, they listened with simple credulity, no doubt, to the sacred history, and with a reverence that our age of illumination can neither emulate nor understand; but we may be sure that they awaited with keenest expectation those invented episodes where tradition conformed itself to familiar life,—the impromptu sallies, the cloth-yard shafts of civic and domestic satire sped by well-known wags of town or gild. Of the

appropriateness of these insertions the spectators made no question, and the dramatists themselves do not seem to have thought it necessary to apologise for their aesthetic creed or practice.

I wish to call especial attention to the author of the play mentioned above as forming the basis of the present dramatic composition. It is a strange thing that to the present day nobody has called him the Father of English Comedy; and still, *that* he undoubtedly is. In addition to the *Secunda Pastorum* (or *Second Shepherds' Play*) he wrote other pageants of the so-called Towneley Cycle amounting to about one-quarter of the whole; probably six plays, and parts of six or eight more — some four thousand lines. The realistic and humorous qualities of his style were unique and singularly suitable to the development of a national comedy. Both for ease of versification and for sense of dramatic effect, he is not unworthy to be mentioned in the same breath with his more distinguished contemporary Chaucer. To the dramatic composition of his day he, indeed, holds the same relation as that sustained by Chaucer toward the metrical romance. He should be read

in every college and known by every gentleman to-day. The best of his plays are of course the *Noë* and the *Secunda Pastorum*; the latter a product of dramatic genius. It stands out English and alone, with its homely wisdom and indigenous figures,—Mak and Gyll and the shepherds,—its comic business, its glow, its sometimes subtle irony, its ludicrous colloquies, its draft of rural manners and morals, its naïve and wholesome reverence. With these qualities it occupies a place apart from other plays of cycles, foreign or native, and in its dramatic anticipations, postponements and surprises, is our earliest masterpiece of comic drama. A similar dramatic excellence characterises all the plays of this anonymous Playwright of Wakefield (for in Wakefield the cycle called by the name of the Towneley family was acted) as well as the insertions made by him in other plays. But he is no more remarkable for his dramatic power than for his sensitive observation, his realistic vigour and his satire. These are manifest in his *Buffeting* and *Scourging* of Christ, and in his contribution to the *Last Judgment*. The poet behind the grimness and the satire is ever the same, sound in

his domestic, social, political philosophy, constant in his sympathy with the poor, and in his godly fear. If by modernising his verse and combining a play of his with others in such manner as to make a drama suitable to the stage of to-day I may have contributed anything to the resuscitation of his work and name, I shall feel that my labour is well paid. His works are published in England, in Pollard's edition of the Towneley Plays (Early English Text Society); and a further discussion of them may be found in the present writer's *Historical View of Early English Comedy* (Representative English Comedies), upon which this account is based.

As to *The Star of Bethlehem*, it attempts to reproduce the material, conditions and atmosphere of the miracles as far as may be appropriate to modern conditions. It is put together from a number of plays with such *callidæ juncturæ* of my own invention as were unavoidable. The "putting together" itself springs from the situation. No one of the old pageants is at the same time of sufficient proportions and sufficient unity to hold a modern audience for an afternoon or evening. When Mr. Greet asked me to pre-

pare for him something from the miracle plays, I found it necessary to amalgamate several plays of common focus. Hence, in *The Star*, the Towneley *Offering of the Magi* plays almost as important a part as the *Secunda Pastorum*. I have intertwined these two, and, for dramatic effect, I have taken the liberty of conveying Kings and Shepherds to the manger at the same time. With these strands I have woven passages from the Towneley *Annunciation* and *Lazarus*, from the York *Angels and Shepherds* and the *Coming of the Three Kings*, from the Coventry *Corpus Christi Salutation and Conception, Birth of Christ, Adoration of the Shepherds*, and *Adoration of the Magi*, from the Chester *Processus Prophetarum* and *Antichrist*, and the Coventry Gild Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors. I have also made use of the legend of the *Three Kings of Cologne*, and of other sources which I have not taken pains to record. In their original form, the songs are of the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries and are such as might well have been inserted by improvising craft-players. Like the text of the dramatic materials of *The Star*, they have been al-

tered only so far as was necessary to make them intelligible to the ordinary auditor. All through I have changed words, lines and sequence; but only when I could not help it. The materials of course I have arranged with a free hand, and occasionally I have had the temerity to put my own words into the mouths of men and angels. But I hope that the spirit of the whole is mediæval, and the figures and the framework and the atmosphere. The great public cannot reach the originals; may it not, however, enjoy even in a reproduction the dramatic art which delighted our forefathers for full five hundred years, and learn something of the simplicity and sublimity of their ancient view of the Mystery that still is modern?

I cannot close without expressing my gratitude to Mr. Ben Greet for many a suggestion in the preparation of this play. I should certainly not have meddled with so sacred a subject had I not been confident that the presentation of the miracle would be wisely entrusted to his exquisite taste and masterly technique.

CHARLES MILLS GAYLEY.

Dramatis Personae

<i>The Angel Gabriel</i>	<i>First Magus, Jasper,</i>
<i>Coll, the First Shepherd</i>	<i>King of Tars</i>
<i>Gyb, the Second Shepherd</i>	<i>Second Magus, Melchior</i>
<i>Daw, the Third Shepherd</i>	<i>King of Araby</i>
<i>Mak, a Sheep-Thief</i>	<i>Third Magus, Balthazar,</i>
<i>Gyll, his wife</i>	<i>King of Saba</i>
<i>Herod</i>	<i>The Virgin Mary</i>
<i>Nuncius, or Messenger of Herod</i>	<i>Joseph</i>
	<i>Ancilla, or Maidservant of the Virgin</i>
<i>Counsellors of Herod</i>	<i>Evil Spirits</i>
<i>Retinue of the Magi</i>	<i>Chorus of Angels</i>

PROCESSUS I. The Shepherds. The Fields near Bethlehem, and a Peasant's Hut

PROCESSUS II. The Magi. Herod's Palace and the Neighbourhood

PROCESSES III. Mak and Gyll. A Peasant's Hut near Bethlehem

PROCESSUS IV. The Star. The Fields; a Stable in Bethlehem



THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Processus Primus — Scena Prima

The fields near Bethlehem. Night. Angels are heard singing :

NOVELL, Nowell, Nowell !
This is the Salutation of the angel
Gabriel :

Tidings true there be come new
From the Trinity,
By Gabriel to Nazareth,
City of Galilee.

A clean maiden and pure Virgin
Through her humility
Hath conceivèd the Persòn
Second in Deity.

Loquitur Gabriel.

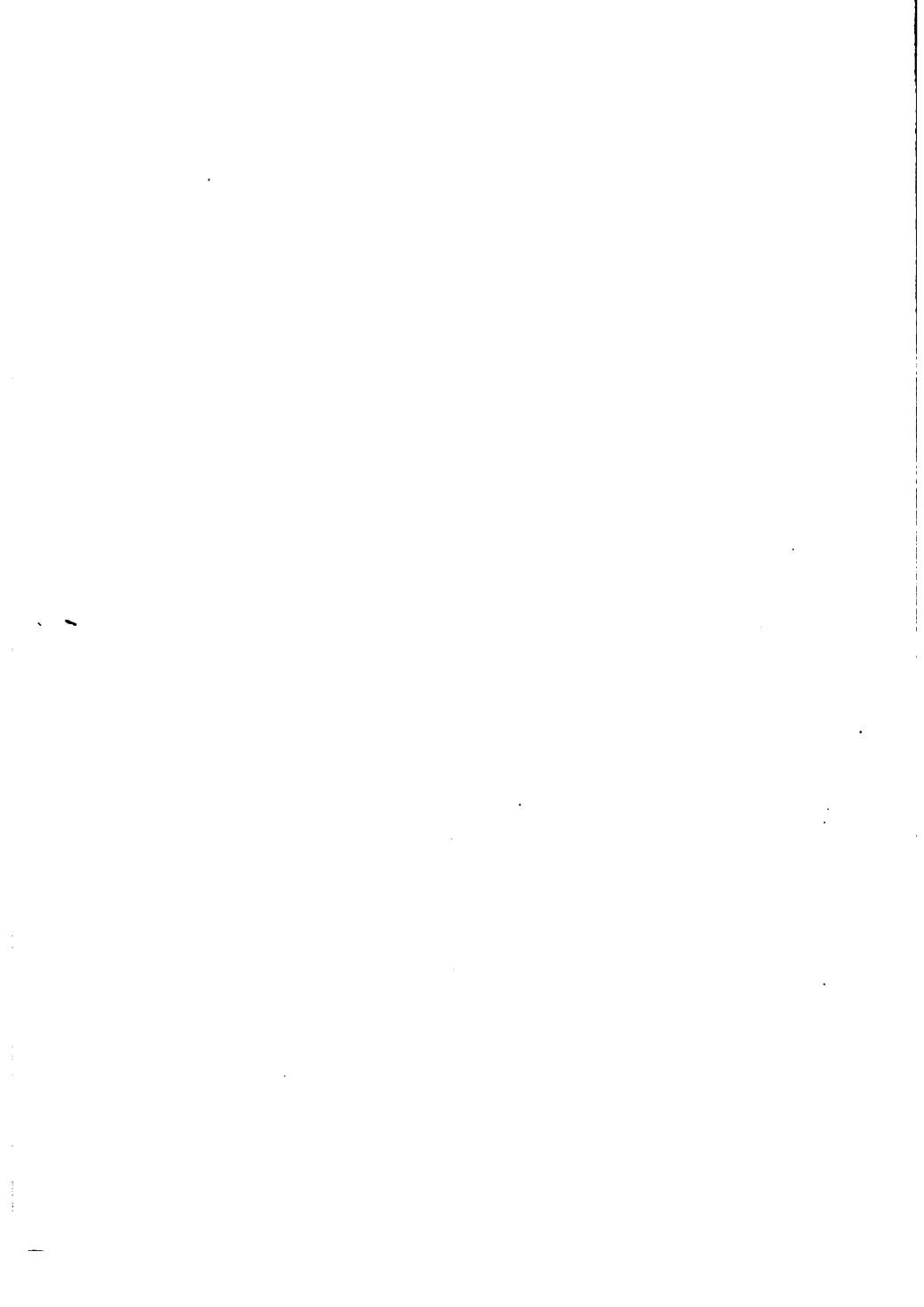
Christ conserve this congregation
From perils past, present, and future,
And the persons here playing, that the pronun-
ciation
Of their sentence to be said may be sad and sure !
And that no oblocution make this matter obscure,
But it may profit and please each person present,
From the beginning to the ending so to endure,
That Christ and every creature with this conceit
be content.

The matter made is of the birth of a Child
That shall get us more grace than ever men had,—
His mother a Maiden, nothing defiled.
She is deputed to bear the Son, Almighty God.
Lo, sovereigns, now may you be glad,
For of this Maiden all we may be fain ;
For Adam that now lies in sorrows full sad,
His glorious birth shall redeem him again.

Listeneth, lordings, both high and low :
As it is said in prophecy—
Not to Earth's Lords alone shall He go
But to the poor and of low degree ;
So shall ye foremost hear and see
These simple shepherds of this ground,
To whom glad tidings presently
Of God's great blessing shall abound.

Therefore of peace I pray you all that be here
present,
And take heed to our talking what we shall say,





For I am Gabriel, the messenger of God omnipotent,
Who governs you in goodness, as he best may,
In heaven may ye all him see!
Now God that is heaven king,
Send us all his dear blessing,
And to his tower may he us bring.—
Amen, for charity!

A splendour in the sky. Three Shepherds enter. Sheep-bells in the distance. A strain of the Gloria in Excelsis.

Gabriel. Joy to God that sits in Heaven,
And peace to man on earthè's ground!

FIRST SHEPHERD, Coll. (*Not understanding, but beholding the vision of splendour.*) Whe! huddle!¹

SECOND SHEPHERD, Gyb. Whe! howe?²

Coll. Hearken to me!

Gyb. Whe! man, thou art mad all out of might.

Coll. Whe! golly! (*He gazes upward and beats his hands for the cold.*)

THIRD SHEPHERD, Baw, their servant. What care is come to thee?

Coll. Step forth and stand by me right,
And tell me then

If thou saw ever such a sight! [*Pointing to the vision.*]

Baw. I? nay, certes, nor never no man.

Gyb. (*Who has not yet seen anything, but beats his hands for the cold and stares in the wrong direction.*) Say, fellows, what! Find ye any feast?

It falls to me to have part, pardè.³

¹ Whew! how!

² What now?

³ par Dieu!

Coll. Whe! huddle! behold into the east!
A sudden sight then shall thou see

Upon the sky!

Gyb. (*Still at a loss.*) Whe! tell me men, among
us three,

What gars¹ you stare thus suddenly?

Baw. As long as we have herdsmen been,
And kept this cattle in this clough,²
So shining sight was never none seen.

Coll. Whe! no golly! now comes it new
enough,

As we maun³ find: (*Beating his
hands, and blowing upon his fingers.*)
It means some marvel us among,

Full sure I am in mind.

Baw. Such sight was never seen
Before in our Jewry;
Some marvels will it mean
That maun be here on high.

The angels sing the Gloria in Excelsis.

Baw. Hark! they sing above in the cloudes
here:

Heard I never a choir so clear!
Now, gentle brothers, draw we near
And hark their harmonie.

*They move in the direction whence the heavenly strains
proceeded.*

Coll. Brother, mirth and solace will come us
among

Like Spring is the sound they bear along.

Gyb. Yea, Spring is the burden of my song:
Now brothers, hearkeneth me.

¹ makes

² valley

³ must

He sings.

Oh Lent is come with Love to town¹
With blossoms and with birdēs rune²
That all this blissē bringeth,
And dayēs-eyēs in the dales,
Notēs sweet of nightingales :
Each fowl his song he singeth.

The throstle³ chideth them for aye :
Their winter-woe is fled away
When erst the woodruff⁴ springeth ;
These fowlēs singeth wonder deal
And whistleth of their winter-weal,
That all the woodē ringeth.

The rose arrayeth her in red,
The leavēs, to the springtime spread,
They waxen all with willē ;
The moon outshineth blithe of blee,
The lily is lovesome to see,
The fennel and the fillē.⁵

As Gyb concludes the song, he moves off with Daw to give his sheep a turn.

Gyb. Lord what these weathers are cold ! And
I am ill happēd ;
I am near-hand⁶ dold⁷ so long have I nappēd ;
My legs they fold, my fingers are chappēd,
It is not as I wold for I am all lappēd
In sorrow,
In storms and tempēt,

¹ to town or in tune

² whispered song

³ thrush

⁴ wood-rowel, yellow asphodel

⁵ wild thyme

⁶ almost

⁷ dulled, numbed

Now in the east, now in the west.
Woe is him never has rest
 Mid-day nor morrow!
But we sely¹ shepherds that walks on the moor,
In faith we are near-hands out of the door;
No wonder, as it stands, if we be poor,
For the tilth² of our lands lies fallow³ as the floor,
 As ye ken.
We are so distressed,
Overtaxed and oppressed:
We are tamed to the hest
 Of these gentlery men.

Thus they be-reave us of rest, may Our Lady them
 harry!
These men that are lord-fest⁴ they cause the plough
 tarry.
That men say is for the best, we find it contrary;
Thus are husbands oppressed in point to miscarry
 In life.
Thus hold they us under,
Thus bring us in blunder;
It were great wonder
 If ever we should thrive.

For may one get a paint⁵ sleeve or a broach now-
 a-days,
Woe is him that him grieve or once only gainsays!
None dare him reprove,⁶ what mastery he mays,
And yet none may believe one word that he says,
 No letter.

¹ simple, happy
² ploughed soil

³ unseeded, neglected
⁴ backed by lords

⁵ embroidered
⁶ reprove

He can make purveyânce,¹
With boast and braggânce,
And all through maintenânce
 Of men that are greater.

There shall come a swain like a peacock for show,
He will borrow my wain,² my plough also ;
And I am full fain to grant ere he go :—
Thus live we in pain, anger, and woe,
 By night and day.

He must have what he langed³—
Tho' I should forgang⁴ it;
I were better be hanged
 Than once say him nay.

It does me good, as I walk thus by mine own,
Of this world for to talk in manner of moan.
To my sheep will I stalk and hearken anon;
And abide on a log or sit on a stone
 Full soon.

For I trow, pardè,
True men if they be,
We get more company
 Ere it be noon.

Gyb. (*Returning and unaware of Coll.*) Benste and
Dominus!⁵ what may this mean?
Why fares this world thus? Oft have we not seen!
Lord, these weathers are spitous and the winter's
 full keen;
And the frosts are so hideous they water mine
 een,—
 No lie!

¹ He can impress or distrain property
⁴ forego

² wagon

³ longed for
⁵ Pastoral Latin for the clerical invocation, *Benedicite Dominus.*

Now in dry, now in weet,
Now in snow, now in sleet;
When my shoes freeze to my feet,
It is not all easy.

But as far as I ken, ere now as I go,
We sely wed-men dree mickle woe;¹
We have sorrow then and then, it falls oft so.
Poor Capel, our hen, both to and fro
She cackles;
But begin she to croak,
To groan or to clock,
Woe is him of our cock,—
Then he walks in the shackles. [Coll tries
here and elsewhere to interrupt.

These men that are wed have not all their will;
When they are sore bestead, they sigh full still;
God wot they are led full hard and full ill:
In bower nor in bed they say nought there-till.²
This tide,
My part have I found.
I know my lessoun:
“ Woe is him that is bound,
For he must abide.”

But now late in our lives — a marvel to me,
That I think my heart rives such wonders to see;
What that destiny drives, it should so be!—
Some men will have two wives, and some men
three,
In store;
Some are woe that has any;

¹ We poor husbands suffer much woe.

² there-to; in reply

But so far as ken I,
Woe is him that has many,
For he suffers sore.

Now, young men a-wooing, for God that you bought,
Be well ware of wedding ; and think in your
thought,—

“ Had I wist ”¹ is a thing that will serve of nought.
Mickle still mourning has wedding home brought²
And grieves,
With many a sharp shower ;
For thou may catch in an hour
That shall serve thee full sour
As long as thou lives.

For, as e'er I read epistle I 've a shrew to my fere;³
As sharp as a thistle, as rough as a brere⁴ ;
She is browed like a bristle, with a sour-looking
cheer ;
But once wet her whistle, and she 'll sing you full
clear.

Her *Paternoster*.
She 's as great as a whale ;
She has a gallon of gall ;
By Him that died for us all,
I would I had run till I 'd lost her.

Coll. (*Succeeding at last in his attempt to interrupt.*)
God look over the raw !⁵ Full deafly ye stand.

Gyb. Yea, the devil in thy maw, so tarriand !
Saw thou aught of Daw ?

Coll. Yea, on a lea-land⁶

¹ “ If I had only known ! ”

³ running mate

² Much silent sorrow walks in with a wife !

⁴ briar

⁵ God help us !

⁶ fellow field

Heard I him blaw,¹ he comes here at hand,
Not far ;—
Stand still !

Gyb. Why ?

Coll. For he comes, hope I.

Gyb. He will make us both a lie
Unless we beware.

They step to one side, as Daw enters.

Daw. Christ's cross me speed² and Saint
Nicholas !

Thereof had I need, it is worse than it was.
Whoso can, let him heed and let the world pass ;
It is ever in dread and brickle as glass,

And it slides by.

This world fared never so,
With marvels more and mo',
Now in weal, now in woe,
But mostly awry. [Perceiving the shepherds.

Ah, sir, God you save, and master mine !
A drink fain would I have and somewhat to dine.

Coll. Christ's curse, my knave, thou art a lazy
hind !

Gyb. What ! the boy must rave ! Let him abide
for a time,
Till we've made it.

Ill thrift on thy pate !
Though the shrew came late,
Yet is he in state
To dine, if he had it.

Daw. Such servants as I, that sweats and swinks,³
Eats our bread full dry, and that's ill, methinks ;

¹ blow

² help me !

³ works

[10]

We're oft wet and weary when our master-men
winks;

Yet come full tardily our dinners and drinks.

 But sprightly
Both our dame and our sire,
When we have run in the mire,
They can snip off our hire,
 And pay us full lightly.

But hear my troth, mastèr! For the bargain ye
make,

My work shall hereaftèr be like what I take;
I shall do but little, sir, and ye maun ever lack¹;
For never lay my supper yet heavy on my stomach
 In the fields.

Why argument keep?

With my staff I can leap,
And men say "Bargain cheap
 Light bargain yields."

Coll. Thou wert an ill lad to ride a-wooing
With a man that had but little for spending.

Gyb. Peace, boy, I bad; no more jangling,
Or I shall make thee full sad, by the heavens' king,
 With thy gaudès²!

Where are our sheep, boy? Are they lorn³?

Daw. Sir, this same day at morn
Left I them in the corn,
 When the bells rang laudès.⁴

They have pasture good, they cannot go wrong.

Coll. That is right. By the Rood, these nights
are long!

Ere we went yet I would, one gave us a song.

¹ you may go without

² nonsense

³ lost

⁴ morning service of praise

Gyb. So thought I as I stood, to mirth us among.

Daw. I grant.

Coll. Let me sing the tenory.

Gyb. And I the treble so high.

Daw. Then the mean shall sing I.

Let's see how ye chant.

They begin to sing in unison.

Summer is i-comen in

Loudè sing, Cuckoo!

Growtheth seed and bloweth mead

And spring'th the wood anew;

Sing, Cuckoo!

Here enter Mak, muffled in a cloak with which he conceals his peasant attire. Making as if unaware of the shepherds, he speaks as below. The shepherds meanwhile sing softly:

Ewè bleateth after lamb,

Loweth after calf the cow;

Bullock starteth, young buck parteth

For the green fern now.

Cuckoo, Cuckoo!

Well singest thou, Cuckoo,

Nor cease thou never now.

Mak. Now, Lord for thy namès seven, that made
both moon and starnes

Well more than I can neven¹; thy Will me over-
turns,

Till I am all uneven; that muddles my concerns.

¹ name

Now would God I were in heaven, for there weep
no more bairns —

So, still!

Gyb. Who is that pipes so poor?

Mak. (*Addressing the audience.*)

Would God ye wist how I fare!

Lo, a man that walks on the moor

And has not all his will!

Gyb. (*Shouting.*) Mak, where has thou gone?
Tell us tiding.

Daw. (*Aside.*) Is he come? Then each one take
heed to his thing. [*He snatches the cloak from
Mak.*]

Mak. (*Affecting the southern and fashionable mode of
speech.*)

What! I am a yeoman, I tell you, of the king;
The self and the same, sent from a great lording,
And such.

Fie on you! Go ye hence
Out of my presence!
I must have reverènce,
Not your vile touch.

Gyb. Why make ye it so quaint,¹ Mak? Ye do
wrong.

Gyb. But, Mak, hark, ye saint! I trow what ye
long²

Daw. I trow the shrew can paint,³ the devil may
him hang!

Mak. I shall make complaint and make you all
to thwang⁴

¹ Why act so strangely?

² What you're after.

³ The wretch can glose.

⁴ I'll have you all flogged.

At a word,
And tell even how ye doeth.

Gyb. But, Mak, is that sooth?
Now take out that southern tooth,¹
And cease thou to gird!

Gyb. Mak, the devil in your ee! A stroke would
I lend you.

Daw. Mak, know ye not me? By God, I could
mend you.

Mak. (*Affecting to recognise them.*)
God bless you all three! Methought I had seen
you,—
Ye are a fair company.

Coll. Can you now mean you?

Gyb. Shrew, jape!²
What will men suppose
If thus late thou still goes?
For the world makes ill noise
Of thy stealing of sheep.

Mak. And I am true as steel, all men wot!
But a sickness I feel that holds me full hot:
My belly fares not weel, it is out of estate.

Daw. "Seldom lies the de'il dead close by the
gate."

Mak. Therefor
If I stand stone still
I feel me sore and ill;
I've not eaten a morsel
This month and more.

Coll. How fares thy wife? By my hood,³ how
does she go?

¹ affected accent

² Rascal, you'll trick us, will you?

³ honour

Mat. Lies weltering, by the Rood,¹ by the fire-side, lo !

And a house full of brood.—She drinks well, too ;
Ill speed other good that she will do

But so !

Eats as fast as she can,
And ilk² year that comes to man
She brings forth another wean,
And some years two.

E'en were I more gracious and richer by far,
I were eaten out of house and out of harbâr,³
Yet is she a foul dowse⁴ if ye come near ;
There is none that trows⁵ nor knows a waur,⁶

Than I thole.⁷

Now will ye see what I proffer ?—
To give all in my coffer
If the morn I might offer
A mass-penny for her soul.

Gyb. (*Yawning.*) I wot so over-wakèd is none
in this shire :

I would sleep if I takèd less for my hire.

Daw. I am cold and nakèd and would fain have
a fire.

Coll. I am weary, for-rakèd,⁸ and run in the
mire,—

Wake thou ! [To Gyb.]

Gyb. Nay, I will lie down by,
For I must sleep truly.

¹ Cross
² each

³ harbour
⁴ creature

⁵ conceives of
⁶ worse

⁷ endure
⁸ walked to death

Baw. (*Also preparing to lie down.*) As good a man's
son was I
As any of you.

But, Mak, come hither! between shall thou lie
down.

Mak. (*Graciously.*) Nay, so I might intervene
when you whisper or rowne¹
But ne'er dread!

(*A loud, and crossing himself.*) From my top to my
toe,

*Manus tuas commendō,
Poncio Pilato,²*

Christ's cross me speed!

After this night-spell, Mak lies down. When the sheep-
herds appear to sleep, he rises.

Now were time for a man that lacks what he
wold³

To stalk privily then to a sheep-fold
And nimbly to work then and be not too bold,
For he might rue the bargāin, if it were told,

At the ending.

Now were time to fulfil;
But he needs good counsēl
That fain would fare well,
And has little for spending.

But about you a circle as round as a moon,
Till I have done that I will, till that it be
noon,

¹ talk of secrets

² While seeming by his mutilated Latin to commend his spirit to divine care,
he contrives to commend his companions to the Enemy

³ would

That ye lie stone-still to¹ that I have done ! [He
draws the circle.]

And I shall say theretill² of good words more
than one

On height : [He poses for an incantation.]
Over your heads my hand I lift,
Out go your een, of your sight be bereft ; —
But yet I must make better shift
An it be right. [They snore.]

Lord ! what they sleep hard ! that may ye all hear.
I was never a shepherd, but now will I lere³ ;
Though the flock be scared, yet shall I nip near.
How ! (To the sheep.) Draw hitherward ! Now
mends our cheer

From sorrow. [Feeling them.]
A fat sheep I dare say !
A good fleece dare I lay !
I'll pay back when I may —
But this will I borrow !
He selects a wether, carries it to his cottage, and knocks.

Scena Secunda

Mak's Cottage

Mak. (Outside.) How, Gyll, art thou in ? Get
us some light.

Gyll. Who makes such a din this time of the
night ?

I am set for to spin ; I hope not I might

¹ till

² to that end

³ learn

Rise a penny to wijn. Beshrew them on height
That so fares!
A housewife that has been
To be jostled thus between!
No work gets done, I ween
With such small wares.

Mak. (*Outside.*)

Good wife, open the hatch! Sees thou not what
I bring?

Gyll. I may let thee lift the latch. (*Mak enters.*)
Ah, come in, my sweeting!

Mak. Yea, thou seems not to reck of my long
standing.

Gyll. By the naked neck art thou like for to
hang.

Mak. Do way!

I am worthy my meat,
For in a strait I can get
More than they that swink and sweat
All the long day.

Thus it fell to my lot, Gyll, I had such grace.

[*Displays the wether.*

Gyll. It were a foul blot to be hanged for the
case.

Mak. I have 'scaped, Jelott, oft as tight a place.

Gyll. "But so long goes the pot to the water,"
men says,

"At last

Comes it home broken."

Mak. Well know I the token,

[18]

But let it ne'er be spoken,—

Now come and help fast! [They let the wether down between them.

I would he were slain. I list well eat¹:

This twelvemonth was I not so fain of one sheep-meat.

Gyll. If they come ere he's slain and hear the sheep bleat—

Mak. Then might I be ta'en; that were a cold sweat!

Go spar²

The gate door.

Gyll. Yea, Mak,

An they come at thy back,—

Mak. Then might I catch from that whole pack,
The devil of the waur.³

Gyll. A good fraud have I spied, since thou canst none:

Here shall we him hide till they be gone,—

In my cradle abide. (She places the sheep in the cradle.)

Let me alone,

And I shall lie beside in the bed, and groan.

Mak. Well said;

We are now ready dight

With a new babe this night.

Gyll. Now well is me, day bright,
That ever I was bred!

This is a good guise and a far cast;

Sure, a woman's advice aye helps at the last!

¹ I'd like to taste him

² bar

³ the worst of it

I wot never who spys:— (*Thinking she hears some one approach.*) again go thou fast!

Matt. An I come not ere they rise, there 'll blaw a cold blast!

I will go sleep.

He passes from the cottage to the moor where the shepherds lie.

Scena Tertia

The Moor, as before

Matt. (*Resuming his place.*) Yet sleeps all this company,

And I shall go stalk privily,

As it had never been I

That carried their sheep.

Silence for a few moments.

Coll. (*Awakening suddenly.*)

*Resurrex a mortuis!*¹ Have hold of my hand!

*Judas carnas dominus!*² I may not well stand:

My foot sleeps, by Jesus! and a cramp in my band!

I dreamed that we laid us full near England.

Gyb. (*Yawning and stretching himself.*) Ah ye!
Lord, but I've slept weel!

As fresh as an eel,—

As light I me feel

As leaf on a tree.

Baw. (*Waking with alarm and rising.*)
*Benstè*² be herein! So my body quakes!
My heart's out of its skin, such a thumping it makes.

¹ More echoes of Church Latin; all the more amusing because the mention of Judas and the Resurrection *a mortuis* is slightly ahead of time.

² God bless all within



Who makes all this din? My brose has the blacks!¹
To the door will I win. Hark fellows, wakes!

We were four:

See ye aught of Mak now?

Coll. We were up ere thou.

Gyb. Man, I give God a vow,
Yet went he nowhaur.²

Daw. Methought he was wrapped in a wolf's skin.

Coll. So are many happed now, chiefly within.

Daw. When we had long napped, I dreamed with a
gin

A fat sheep he trapped but he made no din.

Gyb. Be still,—

Thy dream makes thee wood³;

'T is but phantom, by the Rood!

Coll. Now God turn all to good,
If it be his will!

Gyb. (*Turning to Mak, who sleeps vigorously.*)

Rise, Mak, for shame! Thou lies right lang. [They
shake him.]

Mak. Now Christ's holy Name be us emang!
What is this, for Saint Jame? I may not well gang!
I trow I be the same. Ah! my neck has lain wrang,—

'T is in two!

Mickle thank! (*To the shepherds who have helped him
up.*) Since yester even,

Now, by Saint Streven,
I was flayed with a sveven⁴—

A dream that me slew:

I thought Gyll began to croak and travail full sad,—
Nigh first crow of the cock,—of a young lad

¹ My porridge is smoking! ² nowhere ³ mad ⁴ dream

For to mend our flocke. Not a whit was I glad:
For I've tow on my stock¹ more than ever I had.—

Ah, my head! —

A house full of young weans,
The devil knock out their brains!
Woe is him has such banes,

And thereto little bread!

I must go home, by your leave, to Gyll, as I thought.
I pray you search my sleeve that I steal nought; —
I am loath you to grieve or from you take aught.

[*Exit Mah.*]

Baw. Go forth, ill might thou thrive! Now would
I we sought
This morn,
That we had all our store.

Coll. But I will go before;
Let us meet.

Gyb. Where?

Baw. At the Crooked Thorn.

Exeant Shepherds, singing:

As I out rode this enderes² night,
Of three jolly shepherds I saw a sight,
And all about their fold a splendour bright; —

They sange “terli terlow;
So merrily the shepherds their pipes can blow.”

[*Refrain of pipes.*]

Down from heaven, from heaven so high,
Of angels there came a companie,
With mirth and joy and great solemnitye,

They sange “terli terlow,
So merrily the shepherds their pipes can blow.”

[*Refrain of pipes.*]

¹ Too many tow (heads) already!

² last

Processus Secundus

Loquitur Gabriel

I, Gabriel, soothly did see
A gate in Goddes house on high;
Closèd it was, no man came nigh;
Then told an angel me:
“ This gate shall no man ope, i-wis,¹
For God will come and go by this,
For himself it reserved is,
None shall come there but he.”

By this gate, lordings, verament,
I understand in my intent
That way the Holy Ghost in went
When God took flesh and blood
In that sweet Mother-maid, Mary.
She was that Gate of gates, truly,
For in her he light most graciously
To do all mankind good.

So hath God chosen sely wights²
And rude like these that watch o' nights
Their sheep, to see desirèd sights
That Princes long to see:
For of such lowly clay as these
Is heaven's kingdom made, I wis,
And God's own Mother who doth please
Great God, eternally.

¹ certainly

² simple folk

Lordin's mine, much more matter
Is in this story than you see here;
But the substance, with no more gear,
 Is showed you next beforene.
Now, as by prophecy, trust you me,
Three kings you presently shall see,
Come seeking his Nativity —
 The Christ that shall be born.

Scena Prima

Near Herod's Palace. As Gabriel disappears, all is Darkness, save a Star in the East.

Enter First King, riding, his eyes upon the Star. He is black and of great stature. Attendants.

FIRST KING, Jasper. Lord, of whom this light is lent,
And unto me this sight has sent,
I pray to thee, with good intent,

From shame me shield;
So that I no harmès hent¹
By fell or field.

Also I pray thee specially,
Thou grant me grace of company
That I may have some solace by,
In my travail²:
And, certes, for to live or die
I shall not fail,

Till that I in some land have been,
To wit what this Starnè may mean,
That has me led, with beamès sheen,
Fro my cuntré;
Now wend I will, nor doubt, I ween,
The sooth³ to see.

Enter Second King, Melchior, riding and attended. He is of little stature.

Melchior. Ah! Lord, that is withouten end!
Whence does this selcouth⁴ light descend,

¹ receive

² laborious journey

³ truth

⁴ wondrous

That thus so kindly has me ken'd¹
Out of my land,
And showed me where I may attend,—
Thus bright shinand²?

Certes, I saw never none so bright;
I shall not rest by day nor night,
Till I wit whence may come this light,
And from what place.—
He that it sent unto my sight
Lend me that grace!

Jasper. (*Accosting the Second King.*)
Ah, sir, whither are ye away?
Tell me, good sir, I you pray.

Melchior. Certes, I trow, the sooth to say,
None wot but I.—
I have followed yon starne, veray,
From Araby;

For I am king of that cuntré
And Melchior there men call me.

Jasper. And king, sir, was I wont to be,
In Tars, at hame,³
Both of town and of city;
Jasper is my name;

Yon Starnès light shone to me thither.

Melchior. That lord be loved that sent me hither!
For it will straightway guide us whither
That we shall wend.
We owe to love him both together,
That it to us wold send.

¹ called

² shining

³ home

Enter the Third King, Balthasar, attended, gazing upon the Star. He is of middle size.

Balthasar. Ah, Lord! in land what may this mean?
So selcouth sight was never seen,
Such a Starne shinand so sheen,
Saw I never none;
At once it lightens all between,
By him alone.

What it may mean, that know I naught;
But yond are two, methink, in thought,— [*Approaching the other Magi.*]

I thank him that them hither has brought
Thus unto me:—
I shall assay if they wot aught
What it may be.

Lordings, that are lief¹ and dear,
I pray you tell me with good cheer
Whither you wend, in this manere,
And where that you have been;
And of this Starne that shines thus clear,
What it may mean.

Jas. Sir, I say you certainly,
From Tars for yon Starne sought have I.

Mel. To seek yon light from Araby,
Sir, have I went.

Balt. Now heartily I thank him for-thy,²
That it has sent.

Jas. Good sir, what cuntré came ye fra?
Balt. This light has led me fro Sabà;

¹ welcome

² therefore

And Balthasar, my name to say,
The sooth to tell.

Mel. And kinges, sir, are we twa,
There as we dwell.

Balt. Now, sirs, sin' we are 'sembedle here,
I rede¹ we ride together, in fere,²
Until we wit, in all manère,
For good or ill,
What it may mean, this Starne so clear
Shinand us till.

Here enters a messenger from Herod, conceals himself, and listens.

Balt. (*Continuing.*) Certes, sirs, the sooth to say,
I shall descry now, if I may,
What it may mean, yon Starne, veray,
Shinand till us;
It has been said since many a day
It should be thus.

Yon Starne betokens, well wot I,
The birth of a prince, sirs, securely,
That showes well the prophecy
That it so be;
Or else the rules of astronomy
Deceivès me.

Jas. Certain, Balaam speakes of this thing:
That of Jacob a Starne shall spring
That shall overcome kaiser and king,
Withouten strife;
All folk shall be to him obeying
That bears the life.

¹ counsel

² company

Now wot I well this is the same,
In every place he shall have hame,
All shall him bow that bears a name,
 In ilk cuntré;
Who trows it not, they are to blame,
 What so they be.

Gestl. Certes, lordings, full well wot I,
Fulfilled is now the prophecy:
That Prince that shall overcome on high
 Kaiser and king,
This Starne beareth witness, utterly,
 Of his bearing.
 They approach each other.

Balt. Now is fulfilled here in this land
That Balaam said, I understand:
Now is he born that sea and sand
 Shall wield at will,—
That shows this Starne, so bright shinand,
 Us three untill.

Jas. Lordings, I rede ¹ we wend all three
For to worship that Child so free,
In token that he king shall be
 Of all-kyn ² thing;
This gold now will I bear with me,
 To mine offering.
 He displays the gold.

Gestl. Go we fast, sirs, I you pray,
To worship him if that we may;
I bring incense, the sooth to say,
 Here in mine hand, [*Displays it.*]

¹ advise

² every kind of

In token that he is God veray,¹
Withouten end.

Balt. Sirs, as ye say right so I rede;
Haste we straight unto that stead
To worship him, as for our Head,
With our offering;
In token that he shall be dead,
This myrrh I bring. [Displays it.
Herod's Messenger steals away.

Jas. Where is that King of Jewes' land,
That shall be Lord of sea and sand,
And folk shall bow unto his hand
Both more and less?
To worship him with our offerand²
We will not cease.

Mel. We shall not rest, even nor morn,
Unto we come there he is born.
Balt. Follow this Light, else we be lorn,³
Forsooth, I trow,
That Prince until we come beforne;
Sirs, go we now.

*The kings depart, riding, and singing. The Christus
Natus is heard from afar.*

Scena Secunda

Herod's Palace. Herod, impatient. His Nuntius, or Messenger, enters in haste.

Nuntius. Mohammed, that is of great pausty,⁴
My lord, Sir Herod, thee save and see!

¹ the true God

² offering

³ lost

⁴ potesty, power

Her. (*Raging.*) Where hast thou been so long
fro me,

Vile stinkand lad?

Nun. Lord, gone your errand in this cuntré,
As ye me bade.

Her. Thou liest, lurdan,¹ the devil thee hang!
Why hast thou dwelt away so lang?²

Nun. Lord, ye chide me all with wrang.²

Her. What tidings? Say!

Nun. Some good, some ill, mingled emang.³

Her. How? I thee pray.

Do tell me fast how thou hast farne;
Thy recompense thus shalt thou earn.

Nun. As I came walkand,³ I you warn,
Lord, by the way
I met three kings seekand³ a bairn,
Thus can they say.

Her. To seek a bairn! and for what thing?
Told they any new tiding?

Nun. Yea, lord! They said he should be king
Of town and tower;
For-thy⁴ they went, with their offering,
Him to honour.

Her. King! the devil! but of what empire?
Of what land shall that lad be sire?

I'll do that traitor with vengeance dire;
Sore shall he rue!

Nun. Lord, by a starne as bright as fire
This king they knew;

¹ lout

² long, wrong, among

³ walking, seeking

⁴ therefore

It led them out of their cuntré.

Merr. Wae, fie! fie! devils on them all three!
He shall never have might o'er me,
That new born lad;
If their wit in a starne should be,
I hold them mad.

But first yet will I send and see
The answer of those lurdans three.

[*He beckons to Nuncius, who has retired quaking.*
Messengere, straight hie thou thee,
And make thee yare¹;
Go, bid those kings come speak with me,
That thou toldst of ere.

Say I have great errand them till.

Nun. It shall be done, lord, at your will,
Your bidding shall I soon fulfill
In ilk cuntré.

Merr. Mahowne thee shield from all-kyns ill,
For his poteste.² [*The Messenger departs.*

King? What the devil, "other than I"!

Wae, fie on devils! fie, fie!

Certes, that boy shall dear aby!

His death is dight! [*He mounts his throne.*
Shall he be king thus hastily?

Who, the devil, made him knight?

He beckons to his counsellors, and is about to enter into discussion, when the Messenger returns, conducting the three Kings.

Nun. (*Prostrating himself.)*
Mahowne³ look on you, lord so dear.

¹ ready

² May my God, Mohammed, preserve thee from all evil!

³ The blessings of God, Mohammed, on you!

Mer. Welcome be thou Messengèr!
How hast thou fared sin' thou wast here?

Come, forth with it.

Nun. Lord, I have travelled far and near
Withouten let,¹

And done your errand, sir, soothly;
Three kingès with me brought have I;
From Saba, Tars, and Araby,
Here have they sought.

Mer. Thy recompense shall thou have for-thy,
By Him me bought;

And, certainly, that is good skill,
And sirs, ye are welcome me until.

Balt. Lord, thy bidding to fulfill
We bend full low. [*The three Kings approach
and make their salutation.*]

Mer. Ah, mickle thank of your good will
That ye will so.

For, certes, I have covet greatly
To speak with you, and hear now why:
Tell me, I pray you specially,—
Fore anything,—
What tokening saw ye on the sky
Of this new king?

Jas. We saw his Starne rise in the east,
That shall be King of man and beast,
For-thy,² lord, we have not ceased,
Since that we wist,³

¹ without hindrance

² therefore

³ knew

With our giftes, rich and honest,
To praise him Blist.

Mel. Lord, when that starne rose us beforne,
Thereby we knew that Child was born.

Mer. (*Rising.*) Out, alas, I am forlorn
For ever-mare!
I wold be rent and all to-torn
For dole and care!

Alas, alas, I am full woe!
Sir kings, sit down, and rest you so. [*Turning to his*
counsellors, doctors of the Mohammedan faith.
By scripture, sirs, what say ye two;
Withouten let?
What ye can say thereto
Lo, utter it!

These kings do me to understand,
That born is newly, in this land,
A king that shall wield sea and sand;
They tell me so;
And therefor, sirs, I you command
Your books go to,

And look forthwith, for anything,
If ye find aught of such a king.

First Doctor-Counsellor. It shall be done at
your bidding,
By Him me bought!
And soon we shall you tidings bring
If we find aught.

Second Doc. Soon shall we wit, lord, if I may,
If aught be written in our lay.

Her. Now, masters, thereof I you pray
On all manere.

First Dot. Come forth, let us assay
Our bookest together here.

They go to one side and consult the sacred scrolls of prophecy; then, returning, they address Herod, who has resumed his seat.

Second Dot. Certes, sir, lo, here find I
Well written in prophesy,
How that prophet Isa-ÿ,
That ne'er beguiled,
Tells that a *maiden* of her body
Shall bear a Child.

First Dot. And also, sir, to you I tell
The marvelest thing that ever fell, —
Her maidenhood with her shall dwell,
As did beforne!
That Child shall hight Emanuel
When he is born.

Second Dot. Lord, this is sooth, securëly,
Witness the prophet Isa-ÿ

Her. Out, alas! for dole I die,
Long ere my day!
Shall he have greater power than I?
Ah, wellaway! [He rises.]

Alas, alas, I am forlorn!
I wold be rent and all to-torn;
But look ye yet, as ye did beforne;
For love of me, —
And tell me where that boy is born;

Anon let see. (*The doctors again consult the sacred scrolls.*)

Firſt Doc. All ready, lord, with main and mood.
Mer. Have done at once, or I go wood¹;
And, certes, that gadling were as good
 Have grieved me naught;
I shall see that caitiff's blood,
 By Him that me has bought!

Seconſt Doc. Micheas the prophet, withouten nay,
How that he tells I shall you say:
In Bedlehem, land of Juday,
 As I say you,
From out thereof a Duke shall spray;²
 Thus find we now.

Firſt Doc. Sir, thus we find in prophecy:
Therefor we say you, securely,
In Bedlem, we say you truly,
 Born is that King.
Mer. The devil hang you high to dry,
 For this tiding!

And certes ye lie! it may not be!

Seconſt Doc. Lord, we witness it truly;
Here the sooth yourself may see,
 If ye can read.

Mer. Ah, wellaway! full woe is me!
 The devil you speed!

Firſt Doc. Lord, it is sooth, all that we say,
We find it written in our lay.

Mer. Go hence, varlets, in twenty devil way,
Fast for your life! [The doctors flee from his
presence. The kings rise.

¹ mad

² a leader shall arise

Mighty Mahowne, as he well may,
Let you never thrive!

Alas, whereto wear I a crown?
Or why am called of great renown?
I am the foulest beaten down
 That ever was man;
And by a foul rascallion,
 That no good can.

Alas, that ever I should be knight,
Or holden man of mickle might,
If a lad should reavè¹ me my right,
 All thus me fro;
Lo, to my death I should me dight²
 Ere it were so.

He turns to the Magi.

Ye noble kings, your ears now lend!
Ye shall have safe conduct to wend;
But come again and me attend
 Here, I you pray;
Ye shall me find a faithful friend,
 If ye do swae.³

If it be sooth, this new tiding,
Some worship would I do that King,
Therefor I pray you that you bring
 Me tidings soon.

Jas. All ready, lord, at your bidding
It shall be done. [*The kings mount
their horses and depart.*

¹ bereave me of

² address myself

³ so

Merr. Ah, fie, fie, on the tales that I have been told,
Here before my cruel knee!
How should a bairn wax so bold
If born among the beasts he be?
He is young, and I am old,
A hardy king of high degree! — [Cromets heard in
distance.]
This day those Kingès shall lie cold
If they come again to me. —
My Gods I shall upraise, —
A dark devil with falseness, I say,
Shall cast a mist in the kingès eye
By the banks and the dalès dry,
That by dark they shall come this ways.

(Kneeling.) Mahound, thou art of mightès most,
In my sight a glorious ghost;
Thou comfortest me both in country and coast
With thy wisdom and thy wit;
For truly, lord, in thee is my trust.
Good lord, let not my might be lost:
All my counsel well thou wotst!
Here in thy presence as I set
This besawnt¹ of gold, rich and round
I offer it for my paustè² and me:
That thou mayst aid me in this stound³:
Sweet Mahound, remember me!
He remains a moment with hands and face uplifted; then
rising and approaching the front of the stage above
Hellmouth, he spreads his hands downwards and calls
with head depressed: —
Help! Sathanas and Lucifer,
Balzebub, bold bachelère,

¹ coin

² power

³ hour



Ragnayll, thou art my dear! [Smoke from below, but no devils.

Now fare I wonder evil!

Alas, alas, where is my powere? [Manifold sounds.

Ye demons of the Doom appear

And body and soulè, both in fere,¹

I vow unto the Devil!

Two devils proceed from Hellmouth, with thunder, fire, and cries of "out-harrow."

Primus Demon. Anon! Master, Anon! anon!
From Hell groundè I heard thee groan:
I thought I wold not come myself alone
For thy worship and thy praise.

Ter. O, dark devil with falseness, I say,
Go, cast a mist in those Kingès eye
By bankès and by dale's dry,

That by dark they shall come this ways.

Dumb-show; lurid lights; thunder. *Exeunt devils, calling down mists.* Then darkness.

Explicit Processus Secundus.

¹ company

Processus Tertius

Loquitur Gabriel

Amend thee, man, whiles yet thou may,
Let never no mirth fordo thy mind;
Think thou on the dreadful day
When God shall doom all mankind.
Think thou fares as doth the wind;
This world is waste, and will away;
Man, revolve this in thy mind,
O man, amend thee whiles thou may.

Amend thee, man, whiles thou art here,
Or e'er thou go another gait;
When thou art dead and laid on bier,
Wit thou well thou art too late;
For if thy goods, with none abate,
Were held for thee after thy day,
In heaven they would not mend thy state,
Forthwith amend thee whiles thou may.

If thou be right royàl in rent,
As is the steed standing in stall,
Still know in heart and take intent
That they are Goddes goodes all.
He might have made thee poor and small
As one that begs fro day to day;
Wit thou well, account thou shall,
Therefore amend thee whiles thou may.

Scena Prima

Mak's Hut

Mak. (*Outside.*) Undo this door. Who is here?
How long shall I stand?

Gyll. (*From within.*) Who starts all this gear¹?
Now walk with a wanyand!²

Mak. Ah, Gyll, what cheer? It is I, Mak, your
husband. (*Calling impatiently.*)

Gyll. Then may we see here the devil in a band,
Sir Guile! [*She comes with her knitting to the
door and lets him in.*

Lo, he comes with a coil
As he were gripped by the gule.³
I may not sit at my toil
A hand-long while.

Mak. Will ye hear what fare she makes her sloth
for to gloze?

And does naught but loiter and wiggle her toes.

Gyll. Why, who wanders, who wakes, who comes,
who goes?
Who brews, who bakes? Who makes me this hose?

[*Displaying her handiwork.*

Ah, then,
It is ruth to behold
Now in hot, now in cold,—
Woe worth the househōld
That wants a woman!

¹ trouble

² Be off, and bad luck to you!

³ throat

But what end has thou made with the herds, Mak?

Mak. The last words that they said when I turned
my back

They would look that they had their sheep, all the
pack,

I hope they 'll not be well paid when they find they 're
to lack, Perdè!

But how-so the game goes,

My part they 'll suppose,

And make a foul noise,

And cry out upon me.

But thou must do as thou hight.¹

Gyll. — I accord me theretill,
I shall swaddle him right in my cradlè; [She sees to
the wether, and turns to the bed.
I will lie down straight; come hap me. —

Mak. I will.

Gyll. (*Directing him how to tuck her in.*) Behind!
Come Coll and his marrow,²
They will nip us full narrow.

Mak. Like the de'il I 'll cry "Harrow!"
The sheep if they find.

Gyll. Hearken still for their call; they will come
anon.

Come and make ready all and sing by thine own;
Sing "Lullay" thou shall, for I must groan
And cry out by the wall on Mary and John,
Full sore.

Sing "Lullay" on fast
When thou hears them at last;

¹ promised

² fellows

And but I play a false cast,¹
Trust me no more.

Mak rocks the cradle and sings over the sheep :—

Lully, lulla, thow littell tinè² child,
By by, lully, lullay, thow littell tinè child,
By by, lully, lullay !

Scena Secunda

The Crooked Thorn, beyond the Moor

Enter Coll to Daw and Gyb.

Daw. Ah, Coll, good morn! Why sleeps thou not?

Coll. Alas, that ever was I born! We have a foul blot.

A fat wether have we lorn.

Daw. Marry, God grant not!

Gyb. Who should do us that scorn? That were a foul spot.

Coll. Some shrew.

And in bushes and bogs
All Horbery Shrogs,
I have sought with my dogs
I found but one ewe.

Daw. Now trow me, if you will; by Saint Thomas of Kent,

Either Mak or Gyll, was at that assent.³

Coll. Peace, man, be still! I saw when he went;
Thou slanders him ill; thou ought to repent
Good speed.

¹ If I fool them not

² tiny

³ conspiracy

Gyb. Now by my hopes on high,
If I should even here die,
I'd say, as I am I,
That Mak did that same deed.

Daw. Go we thither, I rede, and run on our feet.
Shall I never eat bread the sooth till I weet.

Coll. Nor drink in my head with him till I meet.

Gyb. I will rest in no stead¹ till that I him greet.—

My brother,
One vow I will plight:
Till I see him in sight
Shall I never sleep night,
If I ne'er sleep another.

They move toward the cottage and listen to the strains proceeding thence.

Scena Tertia

Mak's Hut

Mak within, singing.

Lully, lulla, thow littell tinè child,
By by, lully, lullay, thow littell tinè child,
By by, lully, lullay!

Kind sirs, tell you,
How may we do
For to preserve this day
This pore yongling,
For whom we do singe
By by, lully, lullay?

Cho. Lully, lulla, thow littell — etc.

¹ spot

Herod, the king,
In his raging,
 Chargid he hath this day
His men of might
In his owne sight
 All yonge children to slay! — Cho.

Ah, woe is me,
Pore child, for thee!
 And ever morne and may
For thi parting
I 'll say and sing,
 By by, lully, lullay. — Cho.

Daw. Will ye hear how they hawk? Mak betakes
him to croon.
Gill. Heard I never none croak so clear out of tune;
Call on him.

Gyb. Mak! undo your door soon.
Mak. Who is that spake as if it were noon

Aloft?

Who is that? I say.

Daw. Good fellows, were it day.

Mak. (*Courteously.*) As far as ye may, [Thrusting
his head out.]

Good, speak soft,

Over a sick woman's head that is at mal-ease;
I had liever be dead than she had dis-ease. [They enter.

Gill. (*From the bed.*) Go to another stead, I may not
well wheeze:

Each foot that ye tread, it makes me to sneeze,—
So hee!

Coll. Tell us, Mak, if ye may,
How fare ye, I say?

Mak. But are ye in this town to-day?
Now how fare ye?

(Noting with solicitude their evil condition.) Ye have
run in the mire and are wet yet;
I shall make you a fire if ye will sit.
A nurse would I hire, know ye one that will fit?
Well quit is my hire; — My dream, this is it, —
For a season.
I have bairns, if ye knew,
Well more than eno':
But we must drink as we brew,
And that is but reason.

I would ye dined ere ye yode ¹; methinks that ye sweat.

Gyb. Nay, neither mends our mood — drink nor
meat.

Mak. Why, sir, ails you aught but good?

Daw. Yea, our sheep that we get
Are stolen on the road; our loss is great.

Mak. (Offering drink.) Sirs, drinks!
Had I been thore,²
Some should have bought it full sore.
Coll. (Aside.) Marry, some men trows that you
wore,³
And that us for-thinks.⁴

Gyb. Mak, some men trows that it should be ye.

Daw. Either you or your spouse, so say we.

Mak. Now if ye suppose 't was Gyll or 't was me,

¹ departed

² there

³ were

⁴ suspect



Come and rip up our house and then may ye see
Who had her.

If I 've stolen sow,
Bullock or cow,—
And Gyll rose not now
Sin' first she down laid her.

As I am true and leal, to God here I pray
That this be the first meal that I shall eat this day.

Gill. Mak, by my weal, advise thee, I say!
He learned timely to steal that could not say nay.

Gill. (*In agony.*) I swelt!¹
Out thieves, from my wones²!
Ye come to rob us, for the nonce.
Mak. Hear ye not how she groans?
Your hearts should melt.

Gill. Out, thieves, from my bairn, nigh him not
thor.

Mak. Wist ye how she was ta'en, your hearts
would be sore.

Ye do wrang, I complain, that thus come before
To a wife with a wean — but I say no more!

Gill. Ah, my middle!
I pray to God so mild,
If ever I you beguiled,
May I eat this child [*Pointing to the sheep.*
That lies in this cradle!]

Mak. Peace, woman, for God's pain, and cry not so;
[She screams.

Thou spills³ my brain and makes me full woe.

Gill. I trow our sheep be slain. What find ye two?

¹ I'm fainting!

² dwelling

³ injure

Daw. All work we in vain; as well may we go. [He makes further examination.]

But, (*Swearing.*) hatters! —

I can find no flesh,
Hard nor nesh,¹
Salt nor fresh,
But two empty platters.

Of quick² cattle save this, tame or wild, [*Pointing to the cradle.*]

None, I swear by my bliss, as loud as he smiled.

Gyb. No, so God me bless and give me joy of my child!

Coll. We have marked amiss;³ (*Giving it up.*) I hold us beguiled.

Gyb. Sir, — done!

Sir, our lady him save!

(*Pointing to the cradle.*) Is 't a wench or a knave?

Mak. Any lord might him have,
This child for his son;

When he wakens he grips, 't is a joy but to see —

Daw. How he smiles with his lips in felicity.
But who was his gossips? Come, tell them to me.

Mak. So fair fall their lips! —

Coll. Hark now, a lie!

Mak. So God them thank,
Parkyn, and Gybon Waller, I say,
And gentle John Horne, in good fay, —
He that made all the fray,
With the great sheep-shank.

Gyb. (*Shaking hands before parting.*) .
Mak, friends will we be, for we are all one.

¹ tender

² live

³ made a false guess

Mak. Wae! now I hold for me, for amends get I none.

(*Sulking.*) Farewell all three! All glad were ye gone.

The shepherds pass out.

Daw. Fair words may there be, but love is there none

This year.

Coll. Gave ye the child anything?

Gyb. I trow, not one farthing.

Daw. In again will I fling. [*Returning to the cottage.*

Abide ye me there.

Mak, take it to no grief, if I come to thy bairn.

Mak. (*Warding him from the cradle.*) Nay, thou does me great repreve¹ and foul hast thou farne.²

Daw. The child will it not grieve, that little day-starne.

Mak, with your leave, let me give your bairn
But six-pence.

Mak. Nay, do way; he sleeps.

Daw. (*Drawing nearer.*) Methink he peeps.

Mak. When he wakens he weeps;
I pray you go hence. [*The other shepherds return and sidle up to the cradle.*

Daw. Give me leave him to kiss, and lift up the clout.

(*He lifts it.*) What the devil is this? He has a long snout.

Coll. He is markèd amiss; we wait ill about.

Gyb. "Ill spun woof, iwis, aye comes foul out."³
Ay, so!

He is like to our sheep!

¹ reproach

² done

³ Bad spinning always ravelles.

Baw. How, Gyb! may I peep?

Coll. I trow, "kind will creep

Where it may not go."

Gyb. This was a quaint gaud and a fair cast.¹
It was a high fraud.

Baw. Yea, sirs, was 't.
Let's burn this bawd, and bind her fast.
Ah! false skawd, hang at the last,—

So shall thou.

Will ye see how they swaddle
His fore feet in the middle?
Saw I never in a cradle
A hornèd lad ere now.

Mak. Peace bid I! What! let be your fare!
I am he that him gat, and yond woman him bare.

Coll. What the devil shall he hatt?² Mak? Lo
God, Mak's heir!

Gyb. Let be all that. Now God be his care,
And staff!

Gyll. A pretty child is he
As sits on a woman's knee;
A dillydowne, perde,
To make a man laugh!

Baw. I know him by the ear-mark; that is a good
token.

Mak. I tell you, sirs, hark! his nose was broken;
Erewhile told me a clerk that he was forspoken.³

Coll. This is a false work; I would vengeance
were wroken,⁴

¹ a queer jest and a cunning trick

² be called

³ enchanted

⁴ wreaked

Get weapon!

Gyll. He was taken with an elf,
I saw it myself;
When the clock struck twelve
Was he misshapen.

Gyb. Ye two are well fiefed in the same homestead.

Daw. Sin' they maintain their theft, let's do them
to dead.

Mak. If I trespass eft,¹ gird off my head!
With you will I be left.

Daw. Sirs, list to my rede:²
For this trespass
We will neither ban ne flyte,³
Fight nor chide,
But we'll take him on sight,
And cast him in canvas.

[They toss Mak in a sheet or take him off.

Explicit Processus Tertius.

¹ again

² hear my advice

³ neither curse nor quarrel

Processus Quartus

The Adeste Fidelis is heard; then loquitur Gabriel

Well may these sely wights¹ behold
And wise men wandering blindly yet
How Truth and Charity are met
And Peace and Justice as of old
To kiss each other:
Since of God's embassy I was set
In Galilee of Nazeret
To hail God's Mother.

Among her maidens I found her there,
Susanna, Rebecca and Sephare
That king's daughters were:
All wrought they silk to find them on;
Mary wrought purple, the others none
But other colours sere:—

"Hail, Mary full of grace," I said,
"Mary in this take ye no dread,
Our Lord God is with thee:
Ye shall conceive and bear indeed
A Child, the Son of the Godhead."
"My face I bow," the Virgin said,
"In all humility."

Now jolly hinds that watch their sheep,
And kings that grope in darkness deep

¹ simple folk

Their trysting with yon Star shall keep
That wins mankind to weal:
Butter and honey shall be his meat
That he may Satan downward beat,
Our saulès out of Hell to get —
That Child, Emanuel.

Scena Prima

Storm and Darkness. The Fields near Bethlehem. The Magi are discovered dimly in the Distance, groping their Way, but not toward Bethlehem.

Mel. Alas, in the world how have we sped?
Where is the light that us has led?
Some cloud, forsooth, that Starne has clad
From us away,
In strong distress are we bestead;
What may we say?

Balt. Woe worth Herod, that cursed wight!
Woe worth that tyrant day and night!
For through him have we lost that sight,
And for his guile,—
That shone to us with beamès bright
That latter while.

They remain a space looking for the star, and then dismount from their horses.

Jas. Lordings, I rede we pray all three
To that Lord, whose nativity
The Starne betokened that we could see,
All with his will.
Pray we specially that he
Wold show it us until. [Here kneel all three
Kings.]

Mel. (*Praying.*) Thou Child, whose might no tongue
may tell,
As thou art Lord of Heaven and Hell,

Thy noble Starne, Emanuel,
Thou send us yare¹;
That we may wit by wood and fell
How we shall fare.

The star reappears; the Kings see it but remain kneeling.

Balt. (*Praying.*) Ah, to that Child be ever honoür,
That in this tide has stayed our stoure,²
And lent us light to our succour,
On this manère;
We love thee, Lord of town and tower,
Wholly in fear.

Here rise they all.

Jas. (*To the rest.*) We owe to love him over all
thing,
That thus has sent us our asking;
Behold, yond Starne has made rising,
Sirs, securely;
Of this Child shall we have knowing,
I hope, on high.

Mel. Lordings dear, we need dread naught,
Our great travel to end is brought; [*He points to the
stable in the distance.*]
Yond is the place that we have sought
From far cuntrè;
Yond is the Child that all has wrought,
Behold and see!

Jas. Lordings, we have traveled lang,
And rested have we little emang,
Therefor I rede now, ere we gang,
With all our main,

¹ speedily

² distress

That we should sleep a little lang,
Lo, I am fain;

Balt. 'T is well we rest a thrawe,¹
For to maintain our might,
And then do as we awe²
To the new born Prince of Light.
Mel. Then shall we wend to Herod, the king,
For of our promise we must be paid;
That he himself may make offering
Unto this Child; for so he said. [*They go off.*
Strains are heard of the Gloria in Excelsis.

Scena Secunda

The Shepherds asleep. Angels sing "Gloria in Excelsis," as the Morning of Christ's Birth dawns.

Loquitur Gabriel.

Rise, herdmen hind³! for now is he born
That shall take fro' the fiend what Adam had lorn⁴:
That Warlock to shend⁵ this night is he born;
God is made your friend now at this morn.

His behest is:

At Bethlehem go see
There lies Deity
In a crib full poorlȳ
Betwixt two beastès.

The shepherds awake and listen.

¹ space

² ought

³ gracious

⁴ lost

⁵ That Devil to destroy

Coll. This was the quaintest strain that ever yet I heard.

'T is a marvel to name, we should be thus scared.

Gyb. Of God's son of heaven he spake upward.
All the wood in a levin¹ methought that he gard

Appear.

Daw. He spake of a bairn
In Bedlem, I you warn.

Coll. (*Seeing above him the star.*)
That betokens yond Starne,
Let us seek him there.

Gyb. Say, what was his song? Heard you not
how he craked² it,
Three briefs to a long?

Daw. Yea, marry, he hacked³ it;
Was no crotchet wrong, nor nothing that lacked it.

Coll. For to sing us among, right as he knacked⁴ it,
I can.

Gyb. Let see how ye croon;
Can ye bark at the moon?

*Coll tries to repeat the song "Gle, glo, glas, glum, Gle,
glo, glory"; Gyb jeers at him.*

Daw. Hold your tongues, have done!

Coll. (*Trying again.*) Hark after, then:—
“*Gle, glo, glas,*” etc., then they sing “*Terli Terlow,*”
slightly changed from the former version, — thus:

As I out rode this enderes⁵ night,
Of three joli sheppardes I saw a sight,
And all abowte their fold a Star shone bright;—

¹ He set all the wood in a lightning. ² shouted ³ worked it out
 ⁴ hit it off ⁵ other, recent

They sang "terli terlow;
So merreli the sheppards their pipes can blow."
[Refrain of pipes.

Doune from heaven, from heaven so hie,
Of angeles ther came a companie,—
With mirthe and joy and great solemnity
They sange "terly terlowe,
So merreli the sheppards their pipes can blow."
[Refrain of pipes.

Gyb. To Bedlem he bade that we should gang;
I 'm sore afraid that we tarry too lang.

Baw. Be merry and not sad, of mirth is our sang,
Everlasting joy for our meed may we fang,¹
And no woes.

Coll. Thither therefore, let us hie,—
Tho' we be wetè and weary,—
To see that Child and that Lady
We have it not to lose.

Gyb. We find by the prophecy— (*To Coll again attempting the Angel's song:*) let be your din—
Of David and Isai' and more than I mind,
They prophesied by clergy that in a Virgin
Should he light and lie, to slacken our sin
And slake it,—
Save our kind from woe;
For Isai' said so:

Ecce virgo
Concipiet a child that is naked.

Baw. Full glad may we be and abide that day
That Lovely to see, that Almighty's May.²

¹ receive

² maiden

Lord, well were me for once and for aye,
Might I kneel on my knee some word for to say
To that Child.

Gyb. But the angel said,
In a crib was he laid,
He was poorly arrayed,
And his Mother mild.

They approach the stable.

Coll. Patriarchs that has been and prophets beforene,
They desired to have seen this Child that is born.
They are gone full clean; and this have they lorn.
We shall see him, I ween ere it be morn,
To token.

Gyb. When I see him and feel,
Then wot I full weel
It is true as steel

That the prophets have spoken:—

Coll. To so poor as we are that he wold appear,
First find, and declare by his messengèr. [Pointing to
the Star which stands over the stable.

Go we now, let us fare; the place is us near.

Daw. I am ready and yare;¹ go we in fear
To that bright.

Lord, if thy will it be, [They all kneel outside the stable.
We are lewdè² all three:
Thou grant us som-kyns glee³

To comfort thy Wight.⁴

They remain kneeling with faces toward the Star.

¹ quite ready

² ignorant

³ some kind of charm

⁴ thy Child

Scena Tertia

The Kings sleeping. Gabriel appears and loquitur.

Sir courteous kings, to me take tent,¹
And turn by time ere ye offend! [Jasper awakes and
listens.
From God his self thus am I sent
To warn you, as your faithful friend,
How Herod king has malice meant,
And shapes with shame you for to shend.² —
And so that ye no harmès hent,³
By other ways God wills ye wend
Into your own cuntré;
And if ye ask him boon,
For the deed that ye have done,
Your comfort will he be. [Gabriel departs.]

Jas. Waken, waken, lordings dear!
Our dwelling is no longer here;
An angel spake to us in fear;
Bade us, as a friend,
That we ne should, on no manère,
Home by Herod wend.

Gel. Almighty God in Trinity,
With heart entirely thank I thee,
That thine angel sent till us three,
And taught us so

¹ pay heed

² plans shamefully to harm you

³ take

Our false foe, Herod, for to flee,
That us would fordo.

Gabriel. (*Again appearing.*) Whether that ye be
waken or sleep,
My lordè God shallè you keep:
In goodè time ye did down drepe¹
To take your rest.—
For Herod to the devil he tryst²
To mar you in a thickè mist:
My lord God is full list
To warn you of his zest.³

And therefore, Kingès, when ye rise,
Adore the Child that yonder lies.—
Then wendeth forth by wayès wise
In diverse land.
The Father of God in alle thing
Hath you granted his sweet blessing,
He shall you save from all shending⁴—
With his right hand.

Balt. Unto that Prince I rede we pray,
That till us sent his sign unsought,
That he show us the ready way
That we may find him as we ought.

Mel. (*Pointing to the Star above the stable.*)
Ah, sirs, I see it stand
Above where he is born,
Lo, here is the house at hand,
We have nought missed this morn.

¹ drop

² trusted

³ God desires to warn you of his purpose.

⁴ harm

They advance and kneel with faces toward the Star, a King beside each shepherd. They may sing here the Hosanna in Excelsis. After a space, Melchior approaches the stable and knocks. A handmaiden opens the door part way. Strains are heard from within:

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.

Ancilla. Whom seek ye, sirs, by ways so wild,
With talking, travelling to and fro?

Here wones¹ a woman with her child,

And her husband; here are no mo'.

Mel. We seek a wean shall all things wield,
His certain sign hath said us so,

And his mother, a maiden mild,

Here trust we now to find them two.

Anc. Come near, good sirs, and see,
Your way to end is brought. [First and Second Kings enter.

Balt. (Turning to the Shepherds.) Behold here, sirs,
draw nigh and see,
The same that ye have sought.

¹ dwells

Scena Quarta

The Stable opens and discloses the Manger, Mary and the Child, Gabriel, Joseph, handmaidens, beasts. Shepherds and Magi on either side approach and fall upon their knees. Invisible angels sing the Hosanna in Excelsis.

Gabriel loquitur.

Oh, come ye faithful and adore
The Way that many miss,
The Truth the prophets sought of yore,
The Life that Lighteth this:

To-day the Angels sing in Heaven
Of God's completed plan:
To-day the Son of God is given
To be the Son of Man;

Heaven floods to-day the sentient earth,
All bounds and barriers cease;
Angels and men acclaim one Birth,
One Christ, one Prince of Peace. [Stands behind the Manger.

[**Mary.** (*To Joseph.*) Ah! Joseph, husband, come
hither anon;

My child is born that is King of bliss.

Joseph. Now welcome to me, O Maker of man,
With all the homage that I can!

Thy sweet mouth here will I kiss.

Mary. (*Holding the Child out to her husband.*)

Ah! Joseph, husband, my child waxeth cold,
And we have no fire to warm him with.

Joseph. Now, in mine arms I shall him fold,
King of all kings by field and by frith!¹

He might have had better, and himself wold,
Than the breathing of these beastès to warm him
with.

(*He lays the Child in the manger near the beasts.*)

Mary. Now, Joseph, my husband, fetch hither
my child,

The Maker of man and high King of bliss.

Joseph. That shall be done anon, Mary so mild,
For the breathing of these beastès hath warmed him
well, i-wys.

(*He returns the Child to its mother.*)

Mary. (*Sings.*) Magnificat anima mea Dominum !

The Kings, still kneeling, speak to each other.

Jas. Loved be that Lord that lasteth aye,
That us hath called thus courteously,
To wend by many a wilsome² way,
And come to this clean company !

Æl. Let us make now no more delay,
But straight take forth our treasury,

¹ by land and sea

² devious

And gifts ordained of good array
To worship him, as is worthy.
Balt. He is worthy to wield
All worship, wealth and win.—
And for honour and eld,
Brother, (*To Jasper.*) ye shall begin.]

Jas. (*Advances with his offering, and kneels before the Child.*)

Hail! thou Fairest of fair, folk for to find,
From the fiend and his fellows faithful defend!
Hail! the Best that art borne in this world to unbind
All the bairns that are born and balefully bound!
Hail! do thou mark us thy men and make us in mind,
Since thy might is on earth our mischance to amend!
Hail! clean that art come of a kingly kind,
To be King of this kith, as clergy hath kenned!
And sith it shall work on this wise,
Thy self have I sought, I say thee,
With gold that is greatest of price.—
Be paid of this present, I pray thee!

He lays the gold—a round apple in form, as much as a man might hold in his hand—and thirty gold pieces of money beside the Virgin and the Child.

Mary. Deo gratias.
The Child touches the gold and in that moment it is broken all to dust. The Shepherds, still kneeling, speak to each other:

Gyb. Such hap of weal never herd-men had;
Lo! here is the house, and here is he.
Brothers, be all blithe and glad,
Here is the place that we should be.

Baw. Ya! for sooth this is the same,
Lo! where that Lord is laid
Betwixt two beastès tame,—
Right as the angel said.

Coll. The angel said that he should save
This world and all that wones therein;
Therefore since I for pardon crave,
To worship him I will begin.

The Shepherds advance to adore the Child.

Coll. Hail, comely and clean! Hail, young Child!
Hail, Maker, as I mean! — Of a Maiden so mild!
Thou hast wasted, I wean, the Warlock so wild;
The false guiler of teyn, now goes he beguiled.¹ —

Lo, he merries;
Lo, he laughs, my sweeting!
A full fair meeting! —
I give thee my greeting —
Have a bob of cherries!

[**Mary.** *Deo gratias.]*

Kings advance again to adore.

Wel. Hail! Food that thy folk fully may feed, —
Hail! Flower fairest that never shall fade, —
Hail! Son, that art sent of this same seed,
That shalt save us of sin that our sires had!
Hail! Child that art meet to mark us for meed,
Of a maiden mateless thy mother thou made!
In her goodness, through grace of thy godheàd,
As the gleam in the glass thou didst glide full
glad.
And sith thou shall sit to be our Judge,
To hell or to heaven for to have us,

¹ Thou hast overcome, I think, the evil one, the false weaver of woe.





Incense to thy service we shall not grudge.—
Son! see to thy subjects, and save us!

Attendants enter with incense.

Mary. Deo gratias.

Shepherds advance again to adore.

Gyb. Hail, sovran Saviour, for thou has us sought!
Hail, goodly Babe and Flower, that all thing has
wrought!

Hail, full of favoûr, that made all of nought!
Hail! I kneel and I cower.—A bird have I brought
To my bairn. [Presents it.]

Hail, little tiny mop!

Of our creed thou art crop¹:

I would drink of thy cup,

Little Day-Starne.

Mary. Deo gratias.

Kings advance again to adore.

Balt. Hail! Bairn, that art born our bales to abate,²
For our boot³ to be beaten and bruised without let!

Hail! Friend faithful, we fall at thy feet,—

Thy Father's folk from the fiend shalt Thou fet⁴!

Hail! Man that art made for mankind meet,

Since Thou and thy Mother with mirth are met!

Hail! Duke that shalt drive the Death under feet,—
But when all is done to die is thy debt.

And since thy body buried shall be,

This myrrh will I give to thy graving.⁵

The gift is not great of price or degree,—

Receive it, and see to our saving. [Gives myrrh.]

Mary. (To the Magi.) Sir Kings, ye travel not in
vain,

¹ the topmost branch

² to assuage our woes

³ benefit

⁴ save

⁵ burial

As ye have meant, here may ye find;
For I conceived my Son certaine
Withouten sin or stain of mind,
And bare him here withouten pain,
Though woman's wont is to be pined.
God's angel in his greeting plain,
Said he should comfort all mankind;
Therefore doubt you no dell,¹
Here for to have your boon,—
I shall witness full well,
All that is said and done.

Kings bow and retire. Shepherds advance again to adore.

Daw. Hail, Darling dear, full of godhead!
I pray thee be near when that I have need.
Hail! sweet is thy cheer! My heart would bleed
To see thee sit here in so poor weed,²

With no pennies.
Hail! put forth thy dall³!
I bring thee but a ball;
Have and play thee withal,—

And go to the tennis. [*Shepherds retire. Strains of the Adeste Fidelis are heard.*

Joseph. (*To the Shepherds.*) Herds on hill,
Be not still,
But say your will,
To many a man;
Now God is born,
This merry morn,
All things forlorn⁴
Finden he can.

¹ whit

² garb

³ hand

⁴ that have been lost